Living in the Shadows of Colonialism

Mel Britto
University of British Columbia, Canada

Abstract

When we listen closely, we can hear the legacy and Colonisation in so many of our stories. Colonialism casts its shadow on the lives of all peoples—Indigenous, BPOC and White—in different ways, and until we can practice critical consciousness about its pervasiveness we will continue to perpetuate cycles of oppression that were imposed by settler societies centuries ago. This paper witnesses reflection upon "critical incidents" in the light of colonialism, offering a model for critically examining one's values, assumptions and ways of knowing as a first step in the transformative work of decolonisation. Since Human Ecology is a field concerned with transformative empowerment for individuals and communities it holds agendas like decolonisation at the heart of its mission, and so has a responsibility to explore decolonising mindsets and approaches. The work of decolonisation might be unsettling, but its urgency can no longer be ignored.

KEYWORDS: DECOLONISATION, COLONIALISM, CRITICAL INCIDENTS, PLURAL TRUTH, REFLECTION

Introduction

> The major ideas at the heart of every discipline arose from the real life of a real person—not from the mind alone, but from the thinker's psyche, body, relationships, passions, political and social context. Objectivism tries to protect its fantasy of detached truth by presenting ideas as cut flower, uprooted from their earthy origins. (Palmer, 1990, p. 5)

We are so sculpted by our stories that it can be difficult to see how we are created in their image. This is not a new idea. If we are to take transformative action for all people at all levels of society (IFHE, n.d.) we must reject the notion of detached truth and confront the origins of our stories. The discipline of Home Economics—and all others, under hegemonic colonial education systems—has arisen from the real lives of people with different priorities than those that we now recognise as urgent. The colonial project is both a legacy and current reality, and if we are to prioritise the urgency of equity, reconciliation, repatriation and emancipation we have no choice but to dismantle it. The question that troubles me is: where do I begin?

The more I reflect on the concept and realities of colonialism, the more aware I become of its pervasiveness. My story is shaped by colonialism—the competitiveness and absolutism with which includes, I think, the rational criteria by which I accept something as truth, the privileges I have been afforded by the colour of my skin, and the assimilation of my family into a colonised country. As a reflective practitioner (Vaines, 1997a) I feel that my contributions towards decolonisation cannot be separated from my personal journey, and so I feel that decolonisation must begin in my mind. Becoming aware of the influence of colonialism in my everyday

Email: Mel Britto ✉ mbritto85@gmail.com

assumptions, actions, interactions and values is an essential first step in transforming my practice as a facilitator of learning. Ignorance is no longer an option:

> As long as you are unable to decode the significance of ordinary things, and as long as you take the signs of your culture at face value, you will continue to be mastered by them and by those who constructed them. (Solomon, 1988, as cited in Vaines, 1997a, para. 25)

Purpose and Structure of Paper

In reflecting upon my understandings of colonialism and decolonisation I have found particular personal experiences have served as critical incidents (Tripp, 2011) in my learning journey. In this paper I will share two of these, each of which provoked me to examine my understandings, assumptions, values and behaviour, illuminating my knowledge gaps and inviting me to reconsider my perspectives. These critical incidents have informed my reflection and study differently, enabling me to metaphorically internalise different key ideas of decolonisation that now inform my communication, values, assumptions, and actions as a citizen and educator.

After narrating each critical incident in the form of a vignette, I reflect on the key decolonisation idea that it enabled me to explore, linking it to relevant literature. I will use the subheadings *Vignette*, *Reflection* and *Possibilities for decolonisation* to explore each critical incident. The paper concludes with a final reflection on the relevance of these inquiries to Home Economics/Human ecology. By reflecting on my own critical incidents, I hope to illustrate a kind of model for navigating such circumstances as they pertain to decolonising one's mindset.

For the purposes of this paper the following definitions inform my reflections:

Critical incidents: refers to critical incidents in education as explored by Tripp (2011), and in personal development as it pertains to one's role as an educator. In this sense, they refer to *events that are interpreted, by those experiencing them, as significant, compelling the individual/s to critically examine their values and actions in transformative ways* (Smith, 2019; Tripp, 2011).

Colonialism: Both an historical and contemporary issue. Historically, colonialism was imposed by missionary and militaristic colonial enterprises in an effort to dominate Indigenous societies, usurp land, and establish settler societies in their own image. This paper focuses on *contemporary colonialism—a form of post-modern imperialism in which coloniser values, assumptions, norms, ways of knowing and being are subtly prioritised, perpetuating power relationships and the oppression of Indigenous and Black People and People of Colour [BPOC] established via historical colonisation* (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

Decolonisation: seeks to *critically examine and dismantle the hegemonic hold of colonisation* in society, in an effort to emancipate those who have been historically and perpetually oppressed by it and reveal the deep wealth of Indigenous knowledge that has been systematically ignored by Eurocentric education and knowledge systems (Battiste, 2002). It aims to advance the interests of Indigenous peoples and transform what is important in settler societies by intentionally *decentring dominant colonial ontologies, pedagogies, philosophies, epistemologies, social structures and discourses and recentring Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing as communicated by sovereign Indigenous voices* (Battiste, 2002; McGregor, 2012; Smith, 1999; Younging, 2018). For the purposes of this paper, I will acknowledge that I am exploring what Tuck and Yang (2012) might critique as a metaphorisation of the term decolonisation, concerned with the reform of settler colonial structuring in society, rather than the meaning of the term which is concerned with the repatriation of Indigenous lands and life.

In order to position myself within the research, I will identify here as a White-presenting, bi-racial person, speaking from the perspective of an allied academic (Younging, 2018, p. 10). My intentions in this paper are not to represent "Indigenous Voice" (Younging, 2018, p. 10) or the experiences of colonialism for Indigenous Peoples, but to share some of my stories and reflections regarding colonialism and how they have affected my own ontological and epistemological curiosities and goals. I have maintained an interest in racial identity from a young age, recognising myself as the only White-presenting person in my immediate and extended paternal family, and noticing a disconnect between my experiences and theirs. My reflections, therefore, are grounded in the lived experiences of my family as immigrants to a colonised country, and the systemic impacts colonialism has imposed upon them. As an educator, I am wary of the colonial structures that continue to permeate our education systems, and I am tired of their perpetuation of the colonial project and the intergenerational harms that this project has on Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Critical Incident 1

Vignette: What's in a Name?

Some years ago, I found myself, accidentally, arguing with my father. It was the kind of argument where others in the room raise a "good luck" eyebrow and then abandon ship. We had argued in the past, but this particular occasion did not elicit the familiar defensiveness of "I don't want to do physics anymore" or "I don't care what you think of my love interest." This argument was untrackable and sailed beyond the laws of navigation that we had plotted together in days gone by. It was an argument about the colonial history of our surname.

My knowledge base was this: I know that my paternal family emigrated from India in the early 1950s. I know that my paternal grandmother was nineteen and living in Mumbai (then Bombay) when she had an arranged marriage with a man from Goa, West India, my grandfather, whose surname is etymologically Portuguese. I know that my grandfather had a Portuguese passport, could speak Portuguese and Konkani (the language of the Goan region) and that, at the time of their emigration from India, Goa was a colony of Portugal. I do not know whether my grandfather's ethnicity was Indian, Portuguese or a combination of the two. I do not know whether his/our surname was Portuguese because of ancestral inheritance or whether it was adopted as a result of colonial or Catholic dominance. These were the questions I was seeking to answer when my father met me with rage and metaphorical tirades.

It seemed like a logical set of questions to me:

> Was Nanpa Indian or Portuguese?

> Was his passport Portuguese because he was actually of Portuguese ancestry or was it Portuguese because Goa was a colony of Portugal at the time?

> Were Indians given Portuguese surnames during Portuguese colonial rule of Goa— is that why we have a Portuguese surname?

Whether my father knows the answers to these questions or not, I'm still unsure. What I do know is that his experiences—be they through the legacy of his family, his experiences with racism while settling in Australia, his displaced and amalgamated identity as a child of colour in a White settler society, or some other reason—were so fraught with emotion and illogical meaning that he was unwilling or unable to meet me at my place of wonder.

> It doesn't matter!

> You're an Australian!!!

> The past is a foreign country—they do things differently there. (Hartley, 1953)

To be honest, I cannot really remember particulars. What I do remember is that every question I asked was met with a response that in no way answered it, or even really acknowledged the subject that I was talking about. Yet, it lasted a good 45 minutes. The more I tried to break down my argument by noting historical "facts", logical questioning, seeking linear chronological clarifications, the less receptive my father became.

Reflection: Truth Under the Shadow of Colonialism

Nothing was resolved in this heated non-debate. Yet it has stuck with me because of the disconnect it created between my father and me, even if only for its duration. Despite speaking the same language, we were unable to understand each other's points. I was enquiring from my limited, technical-rational perspective and Eurocentric ontological assumptions of what qualifies as truth. I sought some factual origin of a name which, while possibly traceable in the scientific sense, held a more complex, personal history than I had been prepared or willing to hear. While my father did not answer the questions that I asked, he did offer his own truth of the matter; the history of our name should not hold any relevance as to who we are. We have adapted and our family identity is about how we *now* think and what we *now* do, not who we were. By limiting myself to technical-rational thinking in my line of enquiry, I did not hold any space for the truths that were more relevant to my father's experience, and so was unable to meet him in a place that was comfortable or transformative for either of us.

Colonialism Pervades This Situation Intersectionally

Firstly, there is the colonialism of my father's legacy. Genealogy tests have confirmed some Indian ancestry; however, our surname is etymologically Portuguese. Colonialism clearly usurped the named identity of our family heritage at some point. Such a colonial practice can be seen in the surnames of First Nations Peoples in Australia and Canada, among other countries, and has been noted as a domination strategy used by settler societies in their efforts to assimilate and/or erase Indigenous cultures (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2014; Triffitt, 2007). What plagues me personally about our surname, however, is that its ambiguous origins leave me wondering whether my ancestors were the colonisers (Portuguese) or the colonised (Indigenous Indians of the Goan region). Were they oppressed or oppressors? While the potential answers to these questions do not affect my personal motivations towards dismantling oppressive colonial social structures, they affect my perceptions of myself, my ancestors and our collective legacy. I was recently intrigued by an Instagram post from @ckyourprivilege, seeking perspectives of White folks in their research. They asked "Dear yt [white] friends, who are you without the title of 'liberal', 'anti-racist', 'ally' or 'co-conspirator'?" (Check Your Privilege & Hill, 2022). As a White-presenting person I have often felt unsure of whether my voice is welcome in the academic or social spaces exploring issues of race and decolonisation. Decolonisation endeavours to recentre sovereign, self-determined voices in the communication of the truths, lived experiences and futures of BIPOC peoples, and disrupt colonial systems that have historically observed, evaded and obscured these truths and lived experiences in Eurocentric texts. Such labels serve as a kind of permission for settler voices within anti-oppressive forums, but permission to do what?

To avoid rumination in this rhetoric, I seek to situate myself within the work of decolonisation and understand where my voice sits on the legitimacy-privilege spectrum. Seeking credibility in labels is problematic—not to mention a relic of colonial epistemology—and while I recognise this, I also acknowledge my curiosity, perhaps shared by racialised students and educators, in stepping into this liminal space. Self-concept and critical communication skills, as explored in the British Columbia Family Studies 10–12 curriculum (Ministry of Education Province of British Columbia, 2007), are essential competencies in being able to situate oneself in the work of decolonisation. The lineage and experiences of my family hold important information for me in

developing my own self-concept, which influences the truth that I bring with me as I navigate historical and systemic colonialism.

Secondly, my father's lived experience immigrating to Australia as a 10-year-old saw assimilation as a coping strategy as he adjusted to life in White settler culture. He has an Australian accent, drives a Holden, worships the footy and speaks in a combination of quintessential Aussie catchphrases and humorous insults. If it was not for his looks and commitment to basmati rice with every meal, you probably would not question his heritage. But conversations with my uncles—my father's elder brothers—suggest that my father experienced a loss of cultural heritage during his adolescence. From their stories I know that racism was a feature of my father's experiences settling in Australia, with assimilation proving an effective avoidance strategy. Australia, among other colonised countries, still bears the legacy of restrictive immigration policies (i.e., the White Australia Policy.[1]) and assimilation initiatives that aimed to absorb immigrants into dominant White society at the expense of their own languages, culture, customs and traditions (Museums Victoria, 2017).

Thirdly, my technical-rational inquiry approach reflects my Eurocentric education in White settler Australian society. My early and adolescent education valued scientific truth, linear logic and absolutism; the world appeared to be black and white, right and wrong, better and worse. That which was interpretable, literature, the arts, spirituality, relationships, was valued less than that which was defensible by reason, and a culture of competitiveness celebrated the latter more than the former. Vaines refers to this as a *world as machine* perspective, drawing from the work of Wilshire in suggesting that positivistic ways of knowing have been so institutionalised in the wake of 17th century thinking that meaning has been reduced to linear, empirical, cognitive reasoning at the subjugation of the emotive, imaginative and other ways of knowing (Wilshire, 1990, as cited in Vaines, 1997b). Truth, under this colonial mindset, was not recognised in the emotive, historically rooted responses of my father. This scenario is but one of a myriad demonstrating how the hegemonic pervasiveness of technical-rational thinking perpetuates colonial structures in society, oppressing those whose truths and traumas are not recognised, represented or understood. Under the shadow of colonialism truth is not recognised or accepted for its pluralities.

Possibilities: Plural Truths Illuminate Pathways to Decolonisation

In recent years I have become aware of how the technical-rational mindset has dominated my ontological assumptions. Where *ontology* refers to beliefs about the nature of reality and phenomenon, one's ontological assumptions constitute those elements of one's reality that are accepted as true. The *technical-rational or positivistic perspective* views truth as that which is singular, scientifically discoverable, grounded in theory, systematically justifiable and value-free (Brown & Baldwin, 1995; Sipe & Constable, 1996; Vaines, 1997a). Under this perspective, moral implications are of little interest and everyday experiences outside the scope of scientific importance are trivialised (Vaines, 1997a). The technical-rational mindset is deeply embedded in the institutional and social structures of modern society, dominating the kinds of knowledge

---

[1] Between 1901 and 1966 the "Immigration Restriction Act" limited the migration of non-British and later non-White immigrants into the country. This legislation formally manifested the White Australia Policy which reflected the attitudes of white settler colonies of the 1800s. Non-white groups were considered to be intellectually and morally inferior and a threat to the fairly compensated, white, male, skilled workforce Australia was working to build. The Immigration Restriction Act required that migrants to Australia sit a dictation test, in any European language but chosen by the administering officer, leaving great scope for automatic failure. Less than four percent of applicants passed the test between 1901 and 1909, with no applicants passing after this date. The Immigration Restriction Act targeted immigrants of Asian Descent. While this particular legislation did not directly impact Indigenous Australians, the social structures, values and attitudes being perpetuated under the greater White Australia Policy did. (National Museum Australia, 2021)

types typically recognised and nurtured in education systems and leaving many oblivious to its hold (Battiste, 2005; Eisner, 1992; Fujino et al., 2018; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2016; Vaines, 1997b).

The notion of *truth*, therefore, is limited in scope and systematically arguable under the authorities of science and positivism. In recognising that technical-rational or positivistic perspectives represent but one ontological paradigm it becomes apparent that there are others that are often ignored in hegemonic, Eurocentric societies. By shifting our perspective to the recognition of *truths* we can assume that reality is understood from individual perspectives, shaped by context, power relations and discourse.

Another way of thinking about this is to recognise and acknowledge the various *ways of knowing* that shape our perspectives. Many scholars (Belenky et al., 1997; Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006; Eisner, 1992; Fujino et al., 2018; Heron, 1992; Sipe & Constable, 1996) have offered insight and research into the myriad ways of knowing through which humans understand and communicate. I have found Eisner's (1992) explanations of *cognitive pluralism* to be quite inclusive and conducive to the advancement of equity. He suggests that cognitive pluralism is a conception of knowledge that recognises the human capacity to represent or express experiences and intentions through symbols (Eisner, 1992). The word *symbol* might conjure images of written language or visual representation, though they need not be limited to these Eurocentrically prioritised forms of language. Eisner argues that symbols or *forms of representation* are powerful cultural resources, enabling ideas, thoughts and feelings to be communicated publicly, rather than limited to private experience (1992, p. 80). Where space is created for cognitive pluralism in curriculum development, implementation and evaluation, conceptions of literacy can be expanded, enabling "realms of meaning" (Phenix, 1964, as cited in Eisner, 1992) to be shared that are otherwise neglected in systems prioritising Eurocentric, technical-rational intelligence.

One key priority of decolonising pedagogies is to *recentre Indigenous ways of knowing* (McGregor, 2012). Doing so requires the acknowledgement and inclusion of truths beyond those which are typically valued in hegemonic educational systems. The term *Indigenous ways of knowing* recognises the complexity and diversity of knowledge that exists amongst Indigenous Peoples. The First Peoples Principles of Learning, outlined by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), explains the breadth of learning that Indigenous ways of knowing prioritise. This learning incorporates "generational roles and responsibilities", "exploration of one's identity", "the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors", "memory, history and story" and the recognition that "some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations" (FNESC, n.d. para. 2). While this list is not exhaustive, it does demonstrate "realms of meaning" (Phenix, 1964, as cited in Eisner, 1992) beyond those for which positivistic thinking and education systems tend to hold space.

It is not enough to simply recognise such pluralities of truth and ways of knowing. We must actively create safe and empowering environments for BIPOC students, communities, scholars and activists in order to centre their sovereign, self-determined voices and witness the rewriting of BIPOC narratives. Historically, colonial research methods and texts have observed, evaded and obscured the truths and traumas of BIPOC Peoples (Battiste, 2002; Smith, 1999), perpetuating colonial agendas behind the illusion of objectivity. Illuminating these agendas might begin to dismantle them, however, progress must be directed by sovereign BIPOC voices if reconciliation and emancipation are the objectives. Educators can foster this by intentionally developing respectful, consent-based cultures of communication, forging connections with BIPOC community members rather than viewing engagement with local contexts as optional, ensuring BIPOC voices are equitably represented in classroom resources, and critically analysing and modifying learning outcomes to ensure Indigenous ways of knowing and other

manifestations of cognitive pluralism are accessible, supported and resourced in the classroom. In discussing the Black Thought Project, a social experiment started in 2018 with the intention of centring Blackness in public space (Black Thought Project, n.d.), facilitator Alicia Walters explains how centring Black voices and claiming physical space enables society "to see the world through the lens of the [B]lack experience [requiring us to] imagine how our rules and structures would be reorganized" if historically rooted racial hierarchies were removed (Walters, as cited in Dirshe, 2020). Centring the voices of Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples and People(s) of colour can enable us to witness the effects of colonial structures on the lived experiences of these communities, and come to terms with our own privilege and relationship with colonialism.

My father is not an Indigenous man, and the jury is still out on the extent to which colonialism has negatively affected the legacy of his Indian heritage. However, the disconnect between our perspectives illuminates the limitations of colonial thought structures on all peoples. I am not advocating for inclusivity as the epitomised goal here as such a suggestion ignores the complex history and legacy of colonialism on First Peoples; but I am suggesting that embracing perspectives like cognitive pluralism in our education systems is essentially a prerequisite if inclusivity is to be achieved. We are witnessing the legacy of "cognitive imperialism" (Battiste, 2000) imposed by early settler societies in the kinds of ethnocentric thinking and Eurocentric models of education that prevail today (Smith, 2016), standards that reinforce the notion that Eurocentric/Western ways of knowing, teaching and learning are superior (McGregor, 2012). Rather, we can join the efforts of scholars, activists, artists and citizens by paying attention to ignored perspectives, creating space for the narratives, social imaginaries and pedagogies that have the potential to facilitate empathetic transformation (Fujino et al., 2018). By embracing plurality of truths and cognition we can open up the quest for meaning and its communication in inclusive and transformative ways. By listening to the lived experiences of our families and communities we are able to hear stories of colonialism that continue to resonate, tuning in to the intergenerational impacts of colonialism on our kin, ourselves, our privilege and the state of our society.

Critical Incident 2

Vignette: My Land Non-Acknowledgement

Early in my graduate studies I was invited to present a paper I co-wrote on anti-racist pedagogy at the 15th Canadian Symposium on Home Economics Education at the University of British Columbia. My presentation was on the second day, and I had noticed that, of the first day presentations, only a handful had begun with a land acknowledgement. While I was familiar with acknowledgements of country being part of ceremonial openings at home in Australia, I had not yet experienced land or country acknowledgement in this kind of setting, nor by multiple participants at the commencement of each individual contribution. Feeling out of depth—but also wanting to draw attention to this necessary and important ritual—I decided that I would begin my presentation the following day with an acknowledgement of sorts.

> I would like to start by saying that I do not know how to acknowledge the traditional Peoples of this land, but I think it is very important and I am hoping that somebody will be able to teach me how to do this later on in the symposium.

It was kind of an awkward start. I had naively thought that admitting my ignorance would bring some humility to this process and help other people feel like not knowing was okay if one is willing to seek guidance. I had even rehearsed this address. My presentation proceeded, I watched those of others, social gathering ensued and at no point did anybody offer insight into the appropriate way to give a land acknowledgement. I was not so much baffled by this as I was disappointed that I had not come any closer to understanding this engagement protocol.

Reflection: Doing the Work in the Shadow of Colonialism

Why did nobody approach me to share their understanding of this protocol? Is this lack of response a reflection of colonialism prevailing in the academic context? Have I simultaneously offended my fellows and the First Peoples of the land of the symposium by attempting a land acknowledgement inappropriately? Was this even inappropriate? I have reflected on this incident on numerous occasions and do not have answers to some of these questions. Having actively tuned in to anti-racism and decolonisation since then, I do know how uncertain and uncomfortable the space of doing this work is, for the hold that colonisation has on social behaviours and expectations as well as the plurality of truths that are defining what decolonisation means for different peoples. I also know that I am the person responsible for my journey and contributions towards decolonisation.

Land-acknowledgement—as with any act of decolonisation—should begin with self-reflection and the questioning of one's motivations, goals and intended impact (Native Governance Center, 2019). My inclusion of a non-land acknowledgement was ill-conceived, based on others' presentations and, frankly, lazy. Searching "land acknowledgement UBC" on the internet yields not only an appropriate script, but reasons for its use and links for further self-education. Furthermore, there is a plethora of reputable resources available on the internet, via social media, in bookstores, journals and other platforms, all sharing perspectives and information about decolonisation, histories of White-settlement and colonialism, examples of everyday and institutional racism impacting BIPOC Peoples, anti-racism initiatives, and countless other transformative agendas. Not knowing how to navigate a land acknowledgement was a hurdle I could have, and should have, easily addressed.

Possibilities: Decolonisation is a Workout, not a Walk in the Park

We have discussed how decolonisation involves thinking critically about the colonial structures and assumptions that pervade society. Given the extent to which colonial imperialism pervades Western society and education, it feels fair to suggest that decolonisation can and should be adopted as a mindset, recognising that with such a mindset comes commitment and discomfort. Much like a physical workout, it might not feel as pleasant as a walk in the park. It should, however, feel increasingly familiar a practice the more our mental muscles are flexed, and commitment to practice can enable continued progress. Feeling unsettled is inevitable if transformation is the goal.

Tuck and Yang (2012) and Vowel (2016) suggest that the work of decolonisation should be unsettling. Having to look up land acknowledgement is barely the tip of the discomfort iceberg. Recentring Indigenous perspectives and revealing truths about colonisation do not fall within the comfort zone of settler colonial structuring. Nor do the objectives of repatriating Indigenous land and life, which, if realised completely rather than as an act of symbolic solidarity, implicates and unsettles everyone (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 7). Smith (2016) suggests that decolonisation begins within one's mind and spirit, explaining that if Eurocentrically modelled education systems are to experience decolonising reform they must first accept the worldviews that exist beyond these hegemonic frameworks. Here we circle back to the acknowledgement and inclusion of plural truths and multiple ways of knowing, particularly Indigenous ways of knowing. If we are to recentre Indigenous voices in our efforts to decolonise education systems (Smith, 2016) we must also create space for the languages of expression and communication that imperialism has restricted through text and literature (Smith, 1999). As a student of Eurocentric education systems, my ontological frame of reference is going to be disrupted in my efforts to seek the perspectives of those whom such systems do not serve. Tripp articulates this in the light of teacher reflection:

> Reflection is always informed by a view of the world which is created by our culture, values and experiences. This forms a circularity that reinforces our existing view of the world: we construct our world through reflection, but how and

on what we reflect is largely determined by our existing world view. It is this tendency which means that we have to do something other than merely reflect upon our practice to change it or view it differently. We first must change our awareness through deliberately setting out to view the world of our practice in new ways. (Tripp, 2011, chapter 1, para. 2)

Critically reflecting on my own ontological perspectives and assumptions helps me to notice the form and function of others'. In order to truly meet the perspectives and needs of those that settler colonial structures do not serve, I must begin by separating myself from these structures, creating space for truths that are not recognised under their authority. Failing to do so would only perpetuate this authority. In the case of land-acknowledgement this looks like moving beyond a tokenistic approach, taking the time to learn about the colonial history of the places where we work, teach, learn and visit, examining our understandings and relationships with this information, crafting statements that are well-informed and grounded in respect, acknowledging the meaning behind it. This work might feel unsettling, but it is necessary.

Conclusion

Entering the Liminal Space Between Colonisation and Decolonisation

I find it uncomfortable to write and talk about decolonisation. I have values and hopes upon which my words are grounded; however, I fear that as a White person I am taking liberties with a narrative that is not mine to tell. If the aspirations of decolonisation must be defined by the colonised then who am I to voice opinion? Tuck and Yang (2012) suggest that decolonisation is not a metaphor and can only be truly realised through repatriation—any other form in which it is adopted might serve to diminish this goal. Fujino et al. (2018) advocate for the creation of space in which the voices of the oppressed are recentred, defining the path towards healing and equity. I am not Indigenous nor racially oppressed, and so feel the need to tread respectfully in territory that is not mine to claim. Yet I feel confident that the limitations and assumptions imposed by colonisation extend far beyond those groups who have historically or presently been subject to oppression under its authority. In saying this I do not intend to diminish the atrocities and oppression experienced by Indigenous and other BPOC folks, rather suggest that systemic adoption of a decolonising mindset is a necessary step in finding solutions that involve repatriation and reconciliation. So, while I might feel uncertain speaking of colonialism from my limited and intergenerationally obscured perspective, I must accept my responsibility to contribute to the systemic change that we know is urgent and hold steady in this uncertain space.

Navigating the plurality of truth and the uncomfortable work of decolonisation is a long-term process. In this navigation we enter a liminal space, where we move beyond the familiar and embrace the unknown, for in it lies the potential for transformation. While sitting in this space we have the opportunity to engage in the kind of reflective practice that Vaines advocates, embracing "a journey that is complex, uncertain, unstable, unique and rich in value conflicts" (1997b, figure 1, p. 4). Recognising and making peace with these value conflicts enables a separation from the absolutism of the technical-rational truths typical of colonial knowledge structures. As an educator I recognise my influence over the building of knowledge and illumination of truth, and so choose to sit in the tension of liminal space (Aoki, 2005a, 2005b) as I navigate the chasm that can exist between modernist-laden curriculum and that which emerges from the very individuals and communities with whom we work. Aoki suggests that, for those of us grounded in linear logic, it is necessary to open our minds to the ways in which lived experience diverges from the hegemonic (Aoki, 2005a, p. 164). Where the hegemonic is a perpetuation of colonial imperialism, as it too often is in Western society, it is necessary to examine it critically, paying attention to the realms of meaning that are not present, recognised or supported, and create space that facilitates their emergence in safe and curious ways. Such

space must, therefore, respect symbol systems, languages, time frames, histories and truths that exist beyond hegemonic knowledge systems. If the centring of sovereign voice is a key pathway through which we are to demonstrate our respect and value for non-hegemonic, and particularly Indigenous, ways of knowing, and decolonise our education systems then we must begin by legitimately centring these within official curricula, creating communication networks through which teachers and schools can connect with local and relevant Indigenous and BPOC Elders, educators, scholars and resources, and forging a culture that can sustain these connections into the future.

My own motivation to enter and dwell in this liminal space is rooted in a calling to act ethically and equitably, to enhance the wellbeing of folks who have systemically been hurt, silenced and neglected—this motivation is at the core of the mission of Home Economics (IFHE, n.d.). If Home economists are to adequately demonstrate their capacities to take critical, emancipatory, and transformative action towards improving wellbeing for peoples at all levels of society (IFHE, n.d.) then sought solutions must be guided by the realities of those they endeavour to serve. And so, I move ahead seeking sources of ethical guidance that are critical, ontologically inclusive narrative and honest. It is not enough to recognise that my ontological assumptions and knowledge are limited, I must now sit in the ambiguous space compelled upon me by this ethical calling and tear them apart.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the First Peoples who, from a long time ago until now and into the future, have cared for the lands upon which these words and stories have come to be. I would like to acknowledge the Musqueam people upon whose traditional, ancestral and unceded territories the story of "Critical Incident 2" took place. I would like to acknowledge the Stoney Nakoda, Blackfoot Confederacy and Tsuut'ina Nations upon whose territory (Treaty 7) I wrote the majority of this paper. And I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk people of Noongar boodja, upon whose country "Critical Incident 1" took place and I completed the writing of this paper. I pay my respects to the Elders, past and present, of each of these nations.

Biography

Mel Britto is a parent, educator and MEd student at the University of British Columbia. She has facilitated learning in early childhood, primary and music classes in Australia, Canada and Spain and recently began focusing her interests on the critical social and ecological issues at the heart of Home Economics/Human Ecology through graduate studies at UBC. Mel misses the wind and fig trees of Nyoongar country (South Western Australia), but currently calls the snowy mountains of Treaty 7 (Canmore) in Canada home.

References

Alfred, T., & Corntassel, J. (2005). Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism. *Government and Opposition, 40,* 597-614. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00166.x

Aoki, T. (2005a). Teaching as In-dwelling Between Two Curriculum Worlds. In W.F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin, (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted Aoki.* (pp. 159-166). Erlbaum.

Aoki, T. (2005b). Legitimizing lived curriculum: Toward a curricular landscape of multiplicity. In W.F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin, (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted Aoki*. (pp. 199-215). Erlbaum.

Battiste, M. (2000). Maintaining aboriginal identity, language, and culture in modern society. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 192-208). UBC Press.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations.* https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenousknowledgeandpedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

Battiste, M. (2005). Indigenous knowledge: Foundations for First Nations. *World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium Journal, (1),* 1-17.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). *Women's ways of knowing: the development of self, voice, and mind*. BasicBooks.

Black Thought Project. (n.d.). *Black Thought Project: Centering the Black experience*. https://www.blackthoughtproject.com/home

Brown, M. M., & Baldwin, E. E. (1995). The concept of theory in home economics. *Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society,(7)*32, 71–87.

Check Your Privilege [@ckyourprivilege] & Hill, M. T. [@myishathill]. (2022, May 9). "@myishathill here how's it going? I'm doing some research and wondering how identifying yourself in one of these categories has…" [photograph/text]. *Instagram*. https://www.instagram.com/p/CdV_N9Hr1d9/

Davis-Manigaulte, J., Yorks, L., & Kasl, E. (2006). Expressive ways of knowing and transformative learning. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, 109*, 27–36. doi:10.1002/ace.205

Dirshe, S. (2020, June 19). What does it mean to 'center Black people'? *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/style/self-care/centering-blackness.html

Eisner, E. W. (1992). Curriculum ideologies. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (pp. 302–326). Macmillan.

First Nations Education Steering Committee. (n.d.). *First Peoples Principles of Learning*. http://www.fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning/

Fujino, D., Gomez, J., Lezra, E., Lipsitz, G., Mitchell, J., & Fonseca, J. (2018). A transformative pedagogy for a decolonial world. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 40*(2), 69–95. DOI: 10.1080/10714413.2018.1442080

Hartley, L. P. (1953). *The go-between*. Hamish Hamilton.

Heron, J. (1992). *Feeling and personhood: Psychology in another key*. SAGE.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2014). The Indian Act naming policies. *Working effectively with Indigenous peoples* [blog]. https://www.ictinc.ca/indian-act-naming-policies

International Federation for Home Economics. (n.d.). *IFHE position statement*. https://www.ohea.on.ca/uploads/1/2/6/0/12605917/1_-_ifhe_position_statement.pdf

McGregor, H. E. (2012). *Decolonizing pedagogies teacher reference booklet*. Vancouver School Board. https://blogs.ubc.ca/edst591/files/2012/03/Decolonizing_Pedagogies_Booklet.pdf

Ministry of Education Province of British Columbia. (2007). *Home Economics: family studies 10-12: Integrated Resource Package 2007*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/pdfs/curriculum/appliedskills/2007he_famstudies1012.pdf

Museums Victoria. (2017). *Origins: Glossary*. https://origins.museumsvictoria.com.au/glossary/#:~:text=From%20the%20late%201950s%20to,their%20cultural%20identity%20and%20heritage.

National Museum Australia. (2021). *Defining moments: White Australia policy*. https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/white-australia-policy

Native Governance Center. (2019). *A guide to Indigenous land acknowledgement*. https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/

Palmer, P. (1990). Good teaching: A matter of living the mystery. *Change Magazine*. http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker/writings/good-teaching/

Sipe, L., & Constable, S. (1996). A chart of four contemporary research paradigms: Metaphors for the modes of inquiry. *Taboo, Journal of Culture and Education, 1*,153–163.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.

Smith, M. G. (2019). More than bannock and button blankets: An invitation to dialogue about decolonizing Home Economics education. In *Proceedings of the Canadian Symposium XV: Issues and Directions in Home Economics / Family Studies / Human Ecology Education*. British Columbia.

Smith, T. (2016). Make space for indigeneity: Decolonizing education. *SELU Research Review Journal, 1*(2), 49–59.

Triffitt, G. (2007). Australian aboriginal names. *The Indexer, 25*(3). https://www.anzsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/indexer.2007.23.pdf

Tripp, D. (2011). *Critical incidents in teaching: Developing professional judgement*. Routledge.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Education & Society, 1*(1) 1–40.

Vaines, E. (1997a). Re-visiting reflective practice. In, E. Vaines, D. Bradir & D. Kieren, (Eds.), People and Practice: I*nternational Issues for Home Economics, 5*(3).

Vaines, E. (1997b). Professional practice and families. In Laster, J. and Thomas, R. (Eds.), *Thinking for ethical action in families and communities* (pp. 203–216). Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.

Vowel, C. (2016). *Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada*. Portage & Main Press.

Younging, G. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous Peoples*. Brush Education Inc.